



June 6, 2013

### **Committee on Women in the Academic Profession Offers Both Praise and Suggestions**

The AAUP's Committee on Women in the Academic Profession sent a letter to United States Department of Justice Assistant Attorney General Thomas E. Perez and United States Department of Education Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Russlynn Ali concerning the issuance of a May 9 resolution agreement regarding an investigation of the University of Montana's handling of allegations of sexual assault and harassment at its Missoula campus. The committee offered its commendation stating, "We are encouraged by your call for colleges and universities to use the University of Montana resolution agreement as a 'blueprint' for creating equal-opportunity climates on campuses nationwide."

The committee, however, also expressed deep concern that the redefinition of sexual harassment proposed eliminates the critical standard of "reasonable speech," and, in so doing, may pose a threat to academic freedom in the classroom stating that "while the work of the Department of Justice and the Office for Civil Rights is crucial for the elimination of hostile learning environments for all students, we ask you to consider how a broader definition of sexual harassment may limit academic freedom for the teaching of controversial subject matter. We urge you to clarify further your recent statement addressing criticism of the expanded definition of sexual harassment in order to emphasize the special protection due academic freedom in the classroom."

The letter also included the committee's recently issued policy statement, [\*Campus Sexual Assault: Suggested Policies and Procedures\*](#), [\*Sexual Harassment: Suggested Policies and Procedures for Handling Complaints\*](#), and an offer to meet to discuss the issues further.

**Update:** On July 12, 2013, the United States Departments of Justice and Education responded to the AAUP's Committee on Women in the Academic Profession's June letter concerning the resolution agreement regarding an investigation of the University of Montana's handling of allegations of sexual assault and harassment